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**Subject:** Fw: FYI, Yakima Work  
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Subject: FYI, Yakima Work

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FYI --

Here's our press release announcing our stepped-up work in the Yakima River for toxics. Some of us have affectionately dubbed this the "Toxzilla" project. If anyone has questions, opportunities for collaboration, etc. please contact me.

--Andrew

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - Aug. 15, 2007  
07-231

Efforts expand to clean up toxic chemicals in Yakima River

YAKIMA - The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) is expanding its efforts to clean up the Yakima River by taking a closer look at various toxic chemicals found in fish and waters throughout the river's corridor.

The new effort builds on past work to address DDT levels in the water column and improve the river's water clarity. Significant improvements have been seen in recent years as the agency has worked in concert with local irrigation districts and water users to reduce runoff to the river.

In 2006, Ecology collected and analyzed hundreds of Yakima River fish for toxic chemicals. Ecology is now sampling tributary streams, irrigation returns, and permitted discharges, such as those from wastewater treatment plants and fruit packing houses, for pesticides and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

The new study will help verify if less DDT and other chemical compounds are making their way into the river and help determine what might be the sources of other pollutants, like PCBs, that have been found in resident fish.

"Past studies show that many of the pesticides are carried to the water when soil erodes," explained water quality specialist Mark Peterschmidt. "More farmers are using irrigation methods that reduce or prevent soil erosion, so we've been able to reduce the amount of sediment and chemicals carried to the river."

"We hope this new study will help us to find the sources of some of these other contaminants, so we can figure out how to best prevent them from polluting the water and fish."

The Yakima River Watershed Toxics Project will examine streams, rivers and lakes from the headwaters near Snoqualmie Pass to where the river drains into the Columbia River at the Tri-Cities. Sampling for the project began in April 2007 and will continue for one year.

Most of the chemicals in question are banned pesticides, including DDT and dieldrin, or polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), which were used in electrical transformers and switches.

In some cases, the project will compare current levels of toxic chemicals to data collected in earlier years. This will help the agency to determine how effective pollution control efforts have been.

In other cases, the project will evaluate chemicals not previously studied by Ecology.

Earlier studies found some of these chemicals in fish living in the Yakima River and some of its tributaries. Since 1993, the state Department of Health has advised people to limit the amount of bottom fish they eat from the Lower Yakima River, due to high levels of DDT found in the tissue of those fish.

Improving water quality will benefit farming, fishing, recreation and other activities.

The project study plan can be accessed online at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/0703107.html>

Data from the fish tissue study is currently under evaluation and posted online at: [www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/0703036.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/0703036.html).

Some quick facts from the recent fish tissue study indicate:

- \* Upper Yakima River (above Selah Gap) fish are currently meeting or close to meeting human health criteria for DDT, DDE, DDD, dieldrin, total chlordane, alpha-BHC, and toxaphene.

- \* Lower Yakima River (below Selah Gap) fish are currently meeting or close to meeting human health criteria for selected chemicals including DDT, DDD, total chlordane, and alpha-BHC.

- \* Levels of DDE and dieldrin are above human health criteria in fish samples from the Lower Yakima River. Carp are more contaminated than other lower river species, at least partly due to their greater fat content and feeding habits.

- \* Levels of PCBs above human health criteria are found in fish throughout the river, with higher levels in fish downstream.

More information about water quality cleanup projects is available online at: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/tmdl/watershed/index.html>.

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Ecology's Web site: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov>

#### Glossary of terms:

PCBs are a family of human-made, chlorinated chemical compounds that were once used in a variety of products such as coolants and lubricants in transformers, capacitors, electrical equipment, old fluorescent lighting fixtures, and hydraulic oils. Commercial production of PCBs was stopped in 1977 because of concerns about toxicity and persistence in the environment.

Chlorinated Pesticides -- Pesticides include insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, and related chemicals used to control pests. Chlorinated pesticides were analyzed for in this study because of their widespread occurrence and persistence in the environment. Many of these pesticides

are neurotoxins and are suspected or known carcinogens. Some were banned from use in the United States during the 1970s and 1980s as their hazards became evident. These include DDT, chlordane, and dieldrin.

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Office of Communication and Education Ecology's Home Page:  
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov>

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